

For 140 years, Lithonia First United Methodist Church has provided services and leadership for the surrounding region. Through personal outreach, family ministry, and organizing events like flea markets and barbecues to raise money for the needy, Lithonia First has solidified its place of leadership in its community.

Since its simple beginnings, Lithonia First United Methodist Church has grown and become a source of stability and inspiration for its congregants. Under the ministry of its Pastor, Dr. Lawrence E. Wilson, the church has proven how important faith is to our prosperity, and illustrated the power of a community united. It is my pleasure to honor Lithonia First United Methodist Church for its historic anniversary. I am forever grateful for the church's acceptance, dedication, and commitment, I am truly blessed to be a part of such a wonderful community.●

TRIBUTE TO COLONEL TERRY WILCUTT

● Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I rise today to pay tribute to Kentuckian Terry Wilcutt on the occasion of his recent journey to the International Space Station as commander of the space shuttle Atlantis.

Congratulations to Colonel Wilcutt, on achieving the kind of academic and professional success it takes to receive the honor of commanding a flight into space. Colonel Wilcutt has flown to space not once, but four times, and on two such flights he has held the title of mission commander. I, along with my fellow Kentuckians, am certainly proud to call him one of Kentucky's own. His accomplishments speak well for his home state as well as his alma mater, Western Kentucky University.

Colonel Wilcutt is a Kentuckian, born and bred. He was born in Russellville, KY, graduated from Louisville's Southern High School in 1967, and is a 1974 graduate of Western Kentucky University with a bachelor of arts degree in math. Colonel Wilcutt taught high school math for 2 years and then entered the Marine Corps. While in the Marine Corps, he attended the notorious "Topgun" Naval Fighter Weapons School, achieved honors at every level of pilot training and has logged over 4,400 flight hours in more than 30 different aircraft.

Colonel Wilcutt's career in aeronautics began in 1990 when he was selected by the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, NASA, to become an astronaut. Prior to his September 2000 trip to space, Colonel Wilcutt flew on three missions to space and logged more than 724 hours in space.

On behalf of myself and my colleagues in the Senate, I congratulate you on your accomplishments. Only a handful of Americans reach the level of

excellence required and receive the honor of being selected to lead missions into space. Colonel Wilcutt, I am proud of you, your fellow Kentuckians are proud of you, and your alma mater of Western Kentucky University is proud of you. Thank you for your brave service to our country, and best wishes for further success in the future.●

PRaising THE PRESIDENT FOR HIS EXECUTIVE ORDER PROMOTING FEDERAL CONTRACT OPPORTUNITIES FOR DISADVANTAGED BUSINESSES

● Mr. KERRY. Mr. President, I speak today to commend the President for issuing Executive Order 11625, designed to help strengthen the Federal Government's commitment to providing contracting opportunities to disadvantaged businesses.

In 1998, I took to the floor to successfully defend the Transportation Department's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program from those who sought to weaken it. Today, I am pleased to speak out in favor of the President's efforts to strengthen programs like the DBE, along with all minority-owned business government contracting programs.

It should come as no surprise to anyone in this Chamber familiar with small businesses, especially minority owned firms, that government contracting can help provide a strong foundation to build a prosperous small business. As any successful graduate of the Small Business Administration's 8(a) program will tell you, it provides the opportunities, but you have to supply the entrepreneurial spirit and hard work.

And this hand-up approach is what I mean by assisting minority-owned firms. These programs are not a hand-out. Rather, they exist to help level the playing field and to combat the inequities in our society that may prevent these firms from receiving the same opportunities available to other businesses.

These contracts are beneficial not just because they provide initial contracts to small disadvantaged firms, they also help minority firms establish a record of providing goods and services to the Federal Government. This is of critical importance because it assists these businesses in obtaining future contracts. In turn, these firms help provide jobs and competition to larger businesses, saving the taxpayers money through reduced costs and time saving innovations. Thus, these programs have direct and indirect benefits to our economy at all levels.

The Executive Order signed by President Clinton on Friday will help strengthen minority business ownership by directing Federal agencies to take affirmative steps to increase contracting between the Federal govern-

ment and Small Disadvantaged Businesses, 8(a) Businesses, and Minority Business Enterprises. The Executive Order also holds Federal agencies accountable for carrying out the terms of the Order by requiring them to develop a long-term strategic plan and to submit annual reports to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) of their efforts to increase contracting with disadvantaged businesses; requires Federal agencies to ensure the participation of small and disadvantaged businesses when procuring information technology and telecommunications services; and directs Federal departments and agencies to ensure that all creation, placement, and transmission of federal advertising are fully reflective of the nation's diversity.

I applaud President Clinton's action to help ensure the vitality of minority-owned small businesses. As the Senior Democrat on the Senate Committee on Small Business and a long time supporter of these programs, I urge OMB to forward the agencies' plans and their implementation reports to the House and Senate Committees on Small Business for further review.●

HEALTHIER BABIES MONTH

● Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, today I rise to applaud the support the March of Dimes provides for the Campaign for Healthier Babies Month. This month focuses attention on the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation and its many efforts to reduce the more than 150,000 birth defects which occur every year.

Debilitating birth defects leave our kids unable to walk, hear, think, or fight off disease. However, with the support of organizations like March of Dimes, community health programs, and especially local advocacy groups, the number of children affected by some 5,000 different types of birth defects continues to steadily decline. Since 1960, infant deaths related to birth defects have been cut in half due to increased awareness and medical advances in both surgery and specialized care in neonatal intensive care units.

The March of Dimes Foundation has played a major role in increasing the likelihood that children with birth defects will live to see their first birthday. Over the last decade, scientists have discovered that women who take a daily supplement of B vitamin folic acid in combination with a healthy diet—especially before pregnancy—greatly reduce the chances of their child being affected by birth defects.

Another vital step in reducing the chances of birth defects is the accessibility of prenatal care. My own state of Minnesota has one of America's finest health care systems and, as a result, ranks in the top ten states with regard to low birth-weight and infant mortality. But there are many states that